

## ***Business Wire***

### **Philly Lawyers Lead in Pro Bono But Need to Do More**

Friday, June 28, 2002

PHILADELPHIA--(BUSINESS WIRE)--June 29, 2002--Philadelphia lawyers have reason to be proud of their collective "commitment to make legal services available to the poor and needy" in the region but the "justice system still remains closed to many" and much more needs to be done.

That's one of the key conclusions of a sweeping 78-page report released today by the 13,000-member Philadelphia Bar Association and hailed by Association Chancellor Allan H. Gordon as a "a comprehensive inventory of what we've done and a blueprint for the future of our efforts to deliver legal services to those in need."

"This report," the Chancellor added "contains recommendations which will help ensure that our Association will continue to be a leader in the delivery of legal services provided pro bono publico (for the good of the public)."

Such services are usually provided by lawyers through various public interest programs at no fee or a reduced fee as part their ethical commitment under the Rules of Professional Conduct.

The Pro Bono Task Force Report, produced by a 21-member Committee appointed by the Chancellor in January offers 60 detailed recommendations to improve the pro bono efforts in the region. These include:

- Making pro bono a part of the culture and fabric of the legal community to dramatically increase participation in the direct representation of the poor and disadvantaged.
- Asking the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to adopt a measurable standard of 50 hours of pro bono participation per lawyer, per year as an aspirational goal under the Model Rules of Professional Conduct.
- Honoring the Association's historic financial commitment to the Philadelphia Volunteers for the Indigent Program (VIP) and raising more money to increase financial support for pro bono through the Philadelphia Bar Foundation.
- Awarding continuing legal education credits for lawyers who accept pro bono cases in a new area of practice with a one-time award of two additional credits suggested.
- Requiring all officers and members of the Board of Governors to take at least one pro bono case during each year of their service to the Association.

- Reporting by lawyers of their pro bono hours annually to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court which would maintain the confidentiality of such reports and use the information to assess the need for increased services.
- Encouraging large and mid-size law firms to support pro bono through sound, written pro bono policies and an annual, quantifiable means of reporting each firm's pro bono commitment.
- Expanding pro bono opportunities for paralegals.
- Recognizing outstanding pro-bono service by law students.
- Maximizing technology to enhance the delivery of pro bono legal services.
- Investigating the feasibility of a central home for all area agencies which provide legal services to the poor.
- Considering some type of billable hours credit extended by large firms to their partners and associates for pro bono work and viewing pro bono as a positive factor in employee evaluations.
- Developing pro bono mentoring programs.

The Task Force Report has been accepted by the Association's Board of Governors and Chancellor Gordon has appointed a special committee to be chaired by Chancellor-Elect Audrey C. Talley to consider the Report's observations and recommendations and suggest possible action to the Board.

Gordon thanked Task Force Co-Chairs Aretha Delight Davis and Seymour Kurland and all of the members of the Task Force "for their hard work and extraordinary service to the profession."

"I know that this report is the result of many long hours of hard work, research, sound study and innovative thought," Gordon said "It is an impressive document that is worthy of the most serious and sustained consideration. The path which is charted in this report is a marathon, not a sprint. Consequently, I'm sure we will be turning to it again and again as we seek to carry out our commitment to those who need but cannot afford legal services. That is a commitment that we are duty-bound to honor and it is a commitment that we can and will uphold. The journey along this path begins today " he concluded.